

Asha Kowtal

Asha Kowtal is leading a new generation of Dalit women in India in their fight against oppression and multiple discrimination. She is the General Secretary of the National Dalit Women's movement – called the All India Dalit Mahila Adhikar Manch (AIDMAM) and an expert on Dalit women's issues in India.

AIDMAM is a part of the National Campaign on Dalit Human Rights (NCDHR) in India and works to promote and protect the rights of women who are subjected to caste and gender discrimination.

Ms Kowtal is actively engaged in addressing the issues of violence and discrimination of Dalit women and economic, social and cultural rights, through campaigns and advocacy. Under Asha's leadership, AIDMAM has undertaken some significant activities including a National Tribunal on Justice for Dalit women, Dalit women conferences such as the "National Conference – Re-framing Budgets for Dalit Women in India", training programmes on International Human Rights Mechanisms, and Dalit women self-respect marches (Yatras) across key Indian states.

Ms. Kowtal was recently a speaker at the UN Women and European Union 'National Conference on Gender Equality & Women's Empowerment' in New Delhi and spoke at the 2014 Women in the World Summit in New York in April 2014 – specifically on the mass mobilisation of Dalit women through self-respect marches, [watch the video from the talk here](#). She has also spoken at many previous UN events.

Asha holds a master's degree in social work and has worked in the development sector, including various positions with donor agencies, for more than a decade, with a particular focus on the rights of India's marginalised women. Ms. Kowtal is very familiar with the UN human rights mechanisms and has on several occasions interacted with UN human rights bodies, the OHCHR, and UN member states. Ms. Kowtal is also the Convenor of WinG-India (Women in Governance) - a national level women's network addressing issues of conflict and structural violence on women in India.

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